**DICASTERO DELLE CAUSE DEI SANTI**

FORTALEXIENSIS

BEATIFICATIONIS et CANONIZATIONIS

Servi Dei

**ANTONII DE ALMEIDA LUSTOSA**

e Society Sancti Francisci Salesii

Archiepiscopi Fortalexiensis

(1886-1974)

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**DECREE ON HEROIC virtues**

*"In the shadow of your wings."* This expression, present in various psalms and chosen by the Servant of God. Antônio De Almeida Lustosa as episcopal motto, illustrates well the witness of virtuous life of the Servant of God who, placing his trust and refuge in God, lived an intense union with Him, source of his tireless and fruitful pastoral action.

The Servant of God was born on February 11, 1886, to a peasant bourgeois family of São João del Rei, in the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais. From his parents he learns the spirit of sacrifice and the value of work. The Salesians had opened Don Bosco College in Cachoeira do Campo a few years ago, and Antônio entered it at sixteen. Three years later he decided to become a Salesian, distinguishing himself for his intellectual acuity and commitment to religious life. After his first religious profession, which took place on January 28, 1906, he also became a teacher of philosophy, studying theology in the meantime. His perpetual profession took place three years later, and on 28 January 1912 he received priestly ordination. He was chosen as Master of Novices in Lorraine, then Director in Lavrinhas, in charge of the formation of Salesian aspirants and students of philosophy and theology. In addition to teaching, he forms numerous clerics in the Salesian apostolate, called to animate nearby parishes and oratories. He then carried out the task of Director in Bagé in the Maria Ausiliatrice high school and the position of Vicar of the annexed parish.

In 1924 he was appointed Bishop of Uberaba and received episcopal consecration on 11 February 1925. In Uberaba he found the seminary practically empty, but after a year he had around him about thirty seminarians of the gymnasium. It takes care of the marginalized, making its own the urgency of social justice. After less than four years he was transferred to Corumbá in Mato Grosso, the largest and most difficult see for evangelization. Just two years after he was appointed Archbishop of Belém do Pará, an immense diocese in the Northern Region of Brazil. He remained there for ten years, doing his utmost with the generosity he had always done.

In 1941 he was transferred to the important headquarters of Fortaleza. Here he gave the best of himself, in 22 years of stay, living intensely Don Bosco's "Da mihi animas, cetera tolle". Convinced that the first evangelization consisted in restoring dignity to the poorest people and families, he founded clinics, the "Saint Joseph" Hospital, free popular schools, and workers' circles, inaugurated the "Soup of the poor" and the Social Services of the Archdiocese. Without ever forgetting the care of souls, he gave life to the Preseminary, the Shrine "Our Lady of Fatima" and the radio station "Assumption Cearense". Together with a large number of initiatives and actions of a social and charitable nature, it erects more than 30 new parishes, 45 schools for the needy, 14 health centers on the outskirts of Fortaleza. Its pastoral activity is articulated in particular in the field of catechesis, education, pastoral visits, the increase of vocations, the enhancement of Catholic action, the improvement of the living conditions of the poorest, the defense of workers' rights, the renewal of the clergy, the establishment of new religious orders in Ceará, such as the Institute of Clergy Cooperators and the Congregation of the *Josefinas*.

The Servant of God was also a prolific writer in the most varied fields: theology, philosophy, spirituality, hagiography, literature, geology, botany. He was also much appreciated in the artistic field: his are the stained-glass windows of the Cathedral of Fortaleza.

In 1963 he renounced the archiepiscopal see of Fortaleza and retired to the Salesian House of Carpina, where he spent the last eleven years of his life. Confined to a wheelchair due to a disastrous fall that caused a fractured femur, he died on August 14, 1974, demonstrating, even during illness and suffering, an exemplary attitude of full and unconditional acceptance of God's will. His body rests in the Cathedral of Fortaleza.

Appreciated for his constant and incisive commitment in the four dioceses he led, the Servant of God is also remembered for his asceticism, for having lived poorly, for having been an authentic man of God and a wonderful man of prayer, humble, dedicated to penance and welcoming to all, especially the neediest. He was totally dedicated to the cause of the Kingdom of God: "I would simply continue here to work for the Lord's Prayer: sanctified be your name! May your Kingdom come to us; A bishop's program is always the same: to fulfill his duty!"

By virtue of its reputation for holiness and signs, the Diocesan Inquiry was celebrated at the Archbishop's Curia of Fortaleza (Brazil) from 14 August 1993 to 14 August 2001, the validity of which was recognized by this Dicastery by Decree of 2 May 2003. Once the *Positio* was prepared*,* it was submitted to the Theological Consultors for examination on 8 November 2022. The Ordinary Session of the Fathers Cardinals and Bishops was celebrated on 20 June 2023.

The undersigned Cardinal Prefect then reported all these things to the Supreme Pontiff Francis. His Holiness, accepting and confirming the wishes of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, today declared:  *The theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity towards God as well as towards neighbor, the cardinal virtues of Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance and the other related virtues, practiced to a heroic degree by the Servant of God Antônio De Almeida Lustosa, of the Salesian Society of St. John Bosco, Archbishop of Fortaleza, in the case and for the purpose in question*.

The Holy Father has ordered that the present decree be published and transcribed in the acts of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints.

Given in Rome on June 22 of the year of the Lord 2023

Marcello Card. Semeraro

*Prefect*

✠ Fabio Fabene

Archiv. tit. of Montefiascone

*Secretary*